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Request for the inclusion of an additional sub-item in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of South-East Asian Nations

Letter dated 26 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour, in my capacity as Chair of the Standing Committee of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and on behalf of all 10 Permanent Representatives of ASEAN countries, to request the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly of an additional sub-item under item 22 entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of South-East Asian Nations".

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum is attached (see annex).

I further have the honour to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) **Ouch** Borith
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 26 September 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 21 March 2002, the second Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Joint Management Committee and ASEAN-UNDP dialogue meetings took place, at which ASEAN and UNDP took stock of previous and present collaboration and exchanged views on future cooperation. It was agreed that UNDP would fund a policy-oriented project or facility that would focus primarily on deepening regional integration. Such a facility would help capture emerging issues, particularly given the current changes taking place in the region. The purpose of the facility is to strengthen ASEAN's capacity for exploring policy options in terms of deepening regional integration.

The need for closer cooperation between the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the United Nations

ASEAN continues to face serious challenges from within and from outside. Those challenges encompass the political, social and economic lives of the peoples in the South-east Asian region. ASEAN is responding with a combination of determined initiatives and pragmatic programmes addressing the needs of the peoples in the region and the demands of a globalizing world. This requires the Association to evolve in order to remain relevant, to remain dynamic and competitive, and to develop linkages with each other and other regional and international organizations.

On 29 July 2002, on the occasion of the 35th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Brunei Darussalam, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed on the need for enhancing cooperation with the United Nations as a pre-eminent multilateral institution. Such cooperation is vital to the realization of the basic objectives of ASEAN, which include, among others, accelerating the economic growth, social progress and cultural development of the region, as well as the promotion of stability and peace. In the face of globalization, cooperation between the two organizations would contribute to the economic growth and sustainable development of the region. It would also revitalize the regional capacity following great setback of the Asian financial crisis, from which they are yet to recover fully. Similarly, enhanced cooperation between both organizations is instrumental to the promotion of international peace and security, and to better coordination for the implementation of commitments made at international conferences, including the Millennium, Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg Summits.

Explanatory memorandum

ASEAN, which was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, is an expression of the collective will of the nations of the region to bind themselves together in friendship and cooperation to secure for their peoples the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity. Its original member countries were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand; between 1984 and 1999, Brunei Darussalam, Viet Nam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia joined the organization. The ASEAN region has a population of about 500 million, a total area of 4.5 million square kilometres, a combined gross domestic product of US$ 737 billion, and a total trade of US$ 720 billion.

Existing cooperation between the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the United Nations

ASEAN and the United Nations have been development partners for many decades. Several United Nations agencies support the region's efforts in such areas as poverty eradication, good governance, disaster prevention, the environment, employment and the role of women in society.

Particular mention must be made of the long-standing relations between ASEAN and UNDP, which began almost from the inception of ASEAN in 1967. Ten years later, in 1977, UNDP was officially designated an ASEAN dialogue partner, the only multilateral aid organization to be accorded this status. ASEAN-UNDP ties were further strengthened that year by the launching of the ASEAN-UNDP subregional programmes that aimed to better assist ASEAN with its regional cooperation and integration efforts. The programmes provided the basis for the dialogue relationship between ASEAN and UNDP. The mechanism for dialogue was structured along the UNDP framework for regional/intercountry programmes, which generally operate on five-year cycles.

Through these early cycles of rapidly expanding UNDP support for ASEAN, the UNDP country office in Thailand was given responsibility for coordinating assistance to ASEAN and the majority of the funds were funnelled to projects executed by other United Nations organizations, the most important of which were the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Since 1992, the ASEAN secretariat has been the executing agenda for the UNDP's ASEAN subregional programmes, under the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, with assistance from the UNDP country office in Jakarta. However, the East Asian financial crisis, which began in August 1997, greatly affected these plans. UNDP funding was scaled back as some UNDP resources were reallocated to other subregional and national programmes responding to the aftermath of the crisis.